

Mentor's Introduction

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mentor's introduction

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In the continuing chase to attach our tail to the glitziest kite, art education hasn't made the time to adequately test the structures of these high-flying concepts. Even a casual glance back through a half century of chasing our tails will show us a landscape dotted with the wrecks of flimsily conceived approaches, even movements, which for a moment in time seemed to offer such promise even as they made the reputations of a few kite-makers.

In our most recent decade, in keeping with an increasing national atmosphere of conservatism, the field follows free the furrows plowed by those happy farmers sowing the seeds of intellectualized art. What was more hollistic an experience is thus fragmented into neat compartments with walls defined arbitrarily by self-anointed gurus. And we teachers are to base our changed behavior on faith because there is so little convincing evidence to support claims of this "better way."

One of those compartments has been labeled "art history" and it is into this piece of business that Ms. Williams is shining her light of inquiry. She doesn't blindly accept the notion that "art history" is to be taught to youngsters. Rather she asks, first, what is this thing called "art history," and finds quickly the multiple masks it wears. Are they all appropriate for second graders to wear? Are any? and if so (a very large IF) what teaching contexts must be created to maintain educational honesty?

She has demonstrated an abundant quantity of self-discipline and a thoroughness in the hunt to produce some answers to the questions we all should be asking. If these findings won't convince the ideologues among us to seek salvation, they ought to at least crack the complacent composure of those who find it too easy to accept without reflection and move them to ask their own questions about the contents in the art history box.